

Asbury Park Press

By NICHOLAS HUBA • Staff Writer • June 3, 2009

A U.S. Senator from Oklahoma has issued a scathing 41-page report calling beach replenishment projects ""a waste of money" and saying that nourishment of beaches has led to more coastal development.

The report, developed by Sen. Thomas Coburn, R-Okla., entitled ""Washed out to Sea" lashed out against spending federal money on beach replenishment. ""Taxpayers know that Congress wastes money," Coburn said, ""Yet, many Americans may be surprised to learn that billions of taxpayer dollars have literally washed out to sea through questionable "beach nourishment projects' while critical infrastructure needs have gone unmet."

In the report, Corburn takes shots at the beach replenishment that was completed two years ago in Surf City. ""A beach nourishment project carried out in early 2007 for Long Beach Island was declared ineffective by the local mayor within a year," the reports states. ""A considerable amount of sediment washed away, leading to the town's mayor to conclude about the coastline, ""It's right back where it started." ""...each of the these beaches will continue to demand further nourishment and federal taxpayers dollars," the report added.

Surf City Mayor Leonard T. Connors said the issue of federal funding for beach replenishment comes up every few years, so he is not that concerned. ""I don't get too alarmed when this comes up," Connors said. ""There are saner heads in Washington, that know how important beach replenishment is."

Surf City was the first municipality on Long Beach Island to take part in the current beach replenishment project, which is being done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Harvey Cedars is scheduled to be the next municipality to take part in the project. Corps officials expect the bids for the project to go out later this year.

""They have better things to worry about then beach replenishment," Connors said. ""I think they (members of congress) are a big waste of taxpayers' money and they should not be worrying about things that enhance nature."

Rep. John Adler, D-N.J., said beach funding is critical to coastal New Jersey. **""Beach replenishment projects are critical to our shore communities**, " Adler said.

""These projects are shovel-ready and have a proven track record of creating jobs."

Corburn has taken his fight to reduce beach replenishment funding to the highest office in the country. Corburn has written a letter to President Barack Obama asking him to reduce funding for beach replenishment. ""We are writing to ask that you continue the precedent set by your two predecessors and prioritize limited federal infrastructure funds including stimulus funds, for shovel ready national priorities ... not beach replenishment," stated the letter from Coburn dated May 11.

""In the wake of major natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, and in the midst of our current financial difficulties, it's time for Congress to use a little more common sense in its management of taxpayer dollars," Coburn said.

According to the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association, Coburn is not stranger to asking for a reduction in federal aid for beach replenishment. In 2007, Coburn used a photo of a child making a sand castle to make his point. ""A.S.B.P.A. does not oppose farm subsidies, nor do we hold it against Senator Coburn for supporting that expenditure of federal tax dollars," a release from the Association said.

""However, contrary to the report issued by Senator Coburn's office that uses newspaper and magazine articles to support his position, there are well-documented scientific reports by nationally respected agencies such as the National Academy of Sciences stating that beach nourishment clearly works."

Adler said cutting beach replenishment funding would have an impact on the area. **""We can't ignore the economic value shore businesses generate**, " Adler said.

""Investment in Ocean County's shores is essential to protect our homes and businesses and support our local economy."